

Ensuring an effective Pre-, In- and Post- Class engagement

Often the term 'class' in the traditional school setting creates an image of a closed enclosure, with the teacher at the centre (as a source) of the whole learning process. With the evolving demand of today's student; this approach needs to be questioned and modified. In this paper, I have detailed an approach that has worked well for me and hope that the same would benefit others.

Teaching, to me, is not a low engagement activity. I derive my enthusiasm from the class and my enthusiasm flows into it. For the sake of ease in understanding, I classify my teaching to consist of:

- a. Pre - class preparation
- b. In - Class orchestration
- c. Post - class Integration

With one stage leading into the other.

Pre - class preparation:

Pre - Class Preparation is the first and most important step that I engage in. I personally prefer an extremely practical and skills focused approach to teaching and I have found students highly appreciative of this approach. This is the common repetitive element in my approach.

While my objective in class is definitely to give the students a knowledge base that builds on and refines their understanding of the subject, my application orientation pushes me to impart a skill orientation too into the teaching.

In addition to the detailing out the session plan that helps me create a mental rehearsal of the area of coverage and the class aids that I would require, it also helps me create a mental layout of the time and emphasis at the concept level. Once the sketch is complete, I spend time detailing the presentation aspects during the course. I find presentation dimension of preparation, neglected by most teachers. The general preference is towards a lecture based mechanism. However, there are host of stimulating ways of presentation and thinking of an appropriate mix would be extremely useful.

At the baseline, a good presentation begins with understanding the student. The more granular a teacher could design and deliver his/her message, the higher the impact create. Instead of considering students as passive audience, we treat them as co-creators of the course. Given the high variation within and between batches, teachers should improvise, and spend time understanding the mindset and expectation of the students and embrace the student's uniqueness, thus making the class a richer experience.

I always prepare a Plan B as part of the pre-class preparation and this has helped me shift between different teaching techniques when students fail to get the concept/understanding etc in the first attempt.

In - Class Orchestration:

Having prepared for the class, the teacher has to effectively communicate with students. I have always benefitted from spending the first 5 minutes to assess the student's mood.

Creating an atmosphere that makes them comfortable - and open up for the course is what I leverage on when teaching. Thus, my first task in every class is opening up the class - some generic topic that interest everyone could work well. Once the class's energy level is set high and having summarised the points of the earlier session, my presentation always has a good mix of audio, video, discussions and activities – all aimed at keeping the student's mind constantly engaged.

Intra-group and peer discussions, help students benefit and assimilate a lot of the points. Understanding that the mind is constantly distracted, and being able to guide the distractions so as to help the students enjoy the process is ever useful - leveraging its inquisitiveness and creativity are better ways to tap into its potential.

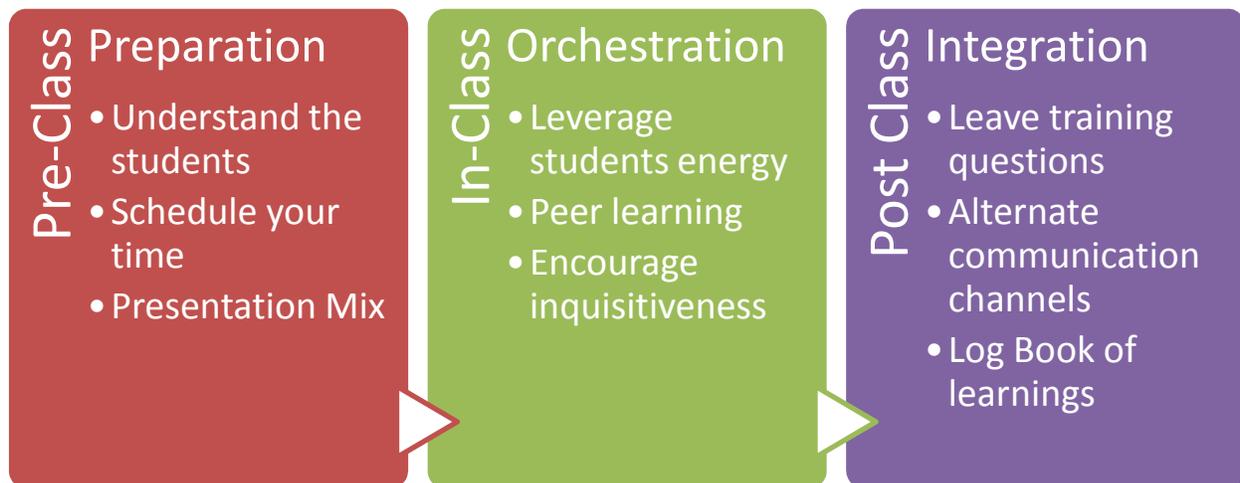
Concluding the session with a recap and a summary handout definitely helps. I always preferred leaving the students with a lot of questions in their minds at the end of the session!

Post - Class Culmination:

Thought provoking questions help encourage a strong post-class means that excites the students about what is being taught. Always create an alternate communication channel for students - could be an email or a phone number. The students could ask any

questions they might have through these channels. While the entire process of learning is powered by the enthusiasm of the student, the ability of the teacher to show where to find the answers and not give the answer itself is important.

Maintaining a log book of the observation about the students and the learning of the class is important for the self-improvement of us teachers.



While this is my approach to teaching and has stood by me in a good stead, everyone would need to develop a good mix of the various preparations that suits his or her style and this would go a long way.

Teaching is process where the teacher helps the student seek and then see - if the teacher limits the boundary to only what is to be covered according to the syllabus - there is little that the student would take away. Remember the role of a teacher is much beyond the academic purpose - good teachers build a life time relationship with students.

Author: Mr. Sachidananda B S
Academic Intern NSRCEL